



MEDIA RELEASE

STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

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FOOD STAMP PARTICIPATION CONTINUES TO GROW *MORE THAN \$66 MILLION IN BENEFITS ISSUED TO TENNESSEE FAMILIES*

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — More than 347,000 Tennessee families received needed help putting food on the table in February through the Food Stamp program. The number of households seeking assistance rose 16 percent from February 2003 to February 2004. The current number of individuals in those households totals more than 797,000.

Food Stamp Program benefits are 100 percent federally funded through the United States Department of Agriculture. The program is administered by Human Services and provides nutritional assistance benefits to children and families, the elderly, the disabled, unemployed and working families.

The rise in Food Stamp Program participation can be attributed to seasonal factors and continued weak job growth. Outreach and education efforts on the part of the Department of Human Services and its partners have made many potentially eligible people aware of the program, as well.

More than \$60 million in food stamp benefits are issued in Tennessee each month. Last month more than \$66 million in food stamp benefits were issued, compared with \$57 million in February 2003. For the last state fiscal year, the average household size was 2.3 persons, and the average household monthly benefit was \$172.

For more information on the Food Stamp program and to view a county by county breakdown of Food Stamp participation and issuance, visit the Department of Human Services website at:
<http://www.state.tn.us/humanserv/fs-participation.htm>

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